

HRH The Prince of Wales visits the village of Aldford



The afternoon of Thursday 26th March proved somewhat of a break away from the norm in the life of Aldford when His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and The Duke of Westminster arrived in tandem!

The first port of call was to the recently refurbished offices at Woodhouse now let to a company called Ellis Whittam who offer corporate support (HR and Health and safety advice) to in excess of 1,000 businesses nationwide. They have recently been voted No 63 in the Sunday Times 'top 100 best companies to work for' - a credible achievement helped in part by the fact that a rain water harvesting system was installed by the Estate at the time of the refurbishment and thanks to a number of the staff taking the initiative to establish a company vegetable patch within the grounds of the offices!

The second stop on the itinerary was to the Victorian barns off Greenlake Lane that currently provide the base for the Estates Forestry Department. A planning permission has recently been granted to convert these to provide 8 Affordable Rural Housing units following the initiative promoted by HRH and His Grace back in 2003.



A crowd of onlookers braved a short lived hailstorm accompanied with music provided by Buckley Brass Band before His Grace said a few words prior to HRH unveiling an engraved stone to commemorate his visit to the village. The tour then proceeded on foot to the Estate's maintenance yard with HRH stopping en route to try his hand at bowling on the crown top green which was built in 1993 funded by His Grace.

On arriving at the Estate's Maintenance yard HRH was introduced to the maintenance and forestry teams. He also had the opportunity to see the nearly completed building soon to become the new base for the foresters as well as a conversion scheme of an existing brick building to provide centralised staff facilities for both respective departments.

The tour continued on foot down Middle Lane with stops to meet local business proprietor Keith Davis and his son at Parsonage Garage, children from the village school who braved the elements eagerly waving their union jack flags and an impromptu step into the village stores to meet proprietors Bob and Jean Ellaby.



The afternoon's events culminated in the village hall where HRH had the opportunity to meet various people including Cheshire dignitaries and clergy, Estate's pensioners, Eaton farmers, Aldford residents, representatives from businesses operating out of converted buildings at Eaton, regular contractors who work for the Estate and a number of current staff. All were treated to a warming cup of tea and a fine spread of sandwiches and cakes put on by a group of ladies from the local community.



The afternoon proved a momentous and exciting episode in the life of Aldford and the wider Estate with notable credits due to the Maintenance and Forestry teams for their exceptional efforts in preparation for the visit and the contributions made by various other contractors, local residents and Estate staff.



The evening saw the Duke and Duchess of Westminster host the Eaton Park Gala Ball in aid of the Prince's Trust, in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales, the charity's president. It was a truly magical event held in a stunning marquee, custom built for the occasion, in the open courtyard at Eaton.



The musical entertainment was provided by Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra and the compere for the evening was television presenter, Carol Vorderman.

An auction featuring such prizes as a garden tour and dinner at Highgrove, a day's driven pheasant shooting at Abbeystead and afternoon tea with Joanna Lumley, contributed to the incredible total of £250,000 raised for the Prince's Trust.